BULL-DOG DRUMMOND

The Adventures of a Demobilized Officer Who Found Peace Dull

By CYRIL McNEILE
"SAPPER"

"YOU'LL DO, X 10."

Prologue.—In December, 1918, four men gather in a hotel in Berne and hear one of the quartet outline a plan to paralyze Great Britain and at the same time seize world power. The other three, Hocking, American, and Steineman and Von Gratz, Germans, all millionaires, agree to the scheme, providing another man, Hiram Potts, an American, is taken in. The instigator of the plot gives his name as Comte de Guy, but when he leaves for England with his daughter he decides to use the name Carl Peterson. The plotters recognize neither nationality nor patriotism nor laws. They are a formidable band of conspirators. The Comte de Guy as leader is to be paid a million pounds sterling.

PROLOGUE—(Continued.)

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Genius that he was in the reading of men's minds, he felt that he knew the result of that ten minutes deliberation. . . And then . . . What then? . . . In his imagination he saw himself supreme in power, glutted with it—a king, an autocrat, who had only to lift his finger to plunge his kingdom into destruction and annihilation. . . And when he had done it, and the country he hated was in ruins, then he would claim his million and enjoy it as a great man should enjoy a great reward. . . . Thus for the space of ten minutes did the Count see visions and dream dreams. That the force he proposed to tamper with was a dangerous force disturbed him not at all: he was a dangerous man. That this scheme would bring ruin, perhaps death, to thousands of innocent men and women caused him no qualm: he was a supreme egoist. All that appealed to him was that he had seen the opportunity that existed, and that he had the nerve and the brain to turn that opportunity to his own advantage. Only the necessary money was lacking . . . and . . . With a quick movement he pulled out his watch. They had had their ten minutes . . . The matter was settled, the die was cast. . . .

He rose and walked across the lounge. For an appreciable moment the Count paused by the door, and a faint smile came to his lips. Then he opened it, and passed into the room.

The American was still chewing his toothpick; Steinemann was still breathing hard. Only von Gratz had changed his occupation and he was sitting at the table smoking a long thin cigar. The Count closed the door, and walked over to the fireplace. . . .

"Well, gentlemen," he said quietly, "what have you decided?"

It was the American who answered.

"It goes. With one amendment. The money is too big for three of us: there must be a fourth. That will be a quarter of a million each."

The Count bowed.

"Have you any suggestions as to whom the fourth should be?"

"Yep," said the American shortly. "These two gentlemen agree with me that it should be another of my countrymen—so that we get equal numbers. The man we have decided on is coming to England in a few weeks—Hiram C. Potts. If you get him in, you can count us in, too. If not, the deal's off."

The Count nodded, and if he felt any annoyance at this unexpected development he showed no sign of it on his face.

"I know of Mr. Potts," he answered quickly. "Your big shipping man, isn't he? I agree to your reservation."

"Good," said the American. "Let's discuss some details."

Without a trace of emotion on his face the Count drew up a chair to the table. It was only when he sat down that he started to play a tattoo on his knee with his left hand. . . .

. . . . . .

Half an hour later he entered his luxurious suite of rooms at the Hotel Magnificent.

A girl, who had been lying by the fire reading a French novel, looked up at the sound of the door. She did not speak, for the look on his face told her all she wanted to know.

He crossed to the sofa and smiled down at her.

"Successful . . . on our own terms. Tomorrow, Irma, the Comte de Guy dies, and Carl Peterson and his daughter leave for England. A country gentleman, I think, is Carl Peterson. He might keep hens, and possibly pigs."

The girl on the sofa rose, yawning.

"Mon Dieu! what a prospect! Pigs and hens—and in England! How long is it going to take?"

The Count looked thoughtfully into the fire.

"Perhaps a year—perhaps six months. . . It is on the lap of the gods. . . ."

CHAPTER I

In Which He Takes Tea at the Carlton and Is Surprised.

ONE.

Captain Hugh Drummond, D.S.O., M. C., late of His Majesty's Royal Loamshires, was whistling in his morning bath. Being by nature of a cheerful disposition, the symptom did not surprise his servant, late private of the famous regiment, who was laying breakfast in an adjoining room.

After a while the whistling ceased, and the musical gurgle of escaping water announced that the concert was over. It was the signal for James Denny—the square-jawed ex-batman—to disappear into the back regions and get from his wife the kidneys and bacon which that most excellent woman had grilled to a turn. But on this particular morning the invariable routine was broken. James Denny seemed preoccupied, distrait.

Once or twice he scratched his head and stared out of the window with a puzzled frown.

"What's you looking for, James Denny?" The irate voice of his wife at the door made him look round guiltily. "Them kidneys is ready and waiting these five minutes."

Her eyes fell on the table, and she advanced into the room wiping her hands on her apron.

"Did you ever see such a bunch of letters?" she said.

"Forty-five," returned her husband, grimly, "and more to come." He picked up the newspaper lying beside the chair and opened it.

"Them's the result of that," he continued cryptically, indicating a paragraph with a square finger, and thrusting the paper under his wife's nose.

"Demobilized officer," she read slowly, "finding peace incredibly tedious, would welcome diversion. Legitimate, if possible; but crime, if of a comparatively humorous description, no objection. Excitement essential. Would be prepared to consider permanent job if suitably impressed by applicant for his services. Reply at once Box X10."

She put down the paper on a chair and stared first at her husband and then at the rows of letters neatly arranged on the table.

"I calls it wicked," she announced at length. "Fair flying in the face of Providence. Crime, Denny—crime. Don't you get 'aving notning to do with such mad pranks, my man, or you and me will be having words." She shook an admonitory finger at him, and retired slowly to the kitchen.

A moment or two later Hugh Drummond came in. Slightly under six feet in height, he was broad in proportion. His best friend would not have called him good-looking, but he was the fortunate possessor of that cheerful type of ugliness which inspires immediate confidence in its owner.

He paused as he got to the table and glanced at the rows of letters. "Who would have thought it, James?" he remarked. "Great Scot! I shall have to get a partner."

With disapproval showing in every line of her face, Mrs. Denny entered the room, carrying the kidneys, and Drummond glanced at her with a smile.

"Good morning, Mrs. Denny," he said. "Wherefore this worried look on your face? Has that reprobate James been misbehaving himself?"

The worthy woman snorted. "He has not, sir—not yet, leastwise. And if so be that he does"—her eyes traveled up and down the back of the hapless Denny, who was quite unnecessarily pulling books off shelves and putting them back again—"if so be that he does," she continued grimly, "him and me will have words—as I've told him already this morning." She stalked from the room, after staring pointedly at the letters in Drummond's hand, and the two men looked at one another.

"Demobilized Officer," She Read Slowly, "Finding Peace Incredibly Tedious, Would Welcome Diversion."

"It's that there reference to crime, sir, that's torn it," said Denny in a hoarse whisper.

"Thinks I'm going to lead you astray, does she, James?" He was opening the first envelope, and suddenly he looked up with a twinkle in his eyes. "Just to set her mind at rest," he remarked gravely, "you might tell her that, as far as I can see at present, I shall only undertake murder in exceptional cases."

He propped the letter up against the toast-rack and commenced his breakfast. "Where is Pudlington, James? and one might almost ask—why is Pudlington? No town has any right to such an offensive name." He glanced through the letter and shook his head. "Tush! tush! And the wife of the bank manager too—the bank manager of Pudlington, James! Can you conceive of anything so dreadful? But I'm afraid Mrs. Bank Manager is a puss—a distinct puss. It's when they get on the soul-mate stunt that the furniture begins to fly."

Drummond tore up the letter and dropped the pieces into the basket beside him. Then he turned to his servant and handed him the remainder of the envelopes.

"Go through them, James, while I assault the kidneys, and pick two or three out for me. I see that you will have to become my secretary."

"Do you want me to open them, sir?" asked Denny doubtfully.

"You've hit it, James—hit it in one. Classify them for me in groups. Criminal; sporting; amatory—that means of or pertaining to love; stupid and merely boring; and as a last resort, miscellaneous." He stirred his coffee thoughtfully. "I feel that as a first venture in our new career—ours, I said, James—love appeals to me irresistibly. Find me a damsel in distress; a beautiful girl, helpless in the clutches of knaves. Let me feel that I can fly to her succor, clad in my new grey suiting."

He finished the last piece of bacon and pushed away his plate.

Denny was engrossed in a letter he had just opened. A perplexed look was spreading over his face, and suddenly he sucked his teeth loudly. It was a sure sign that James was excited, and Drummond glanced up quickly, and removed the letter from his hands. "I'm surprised at you, James," he remarked severely. "A secretary should control itself. Don't forget that the perfect secretary is an It; an automatic machine—a thing incapable of feeling. . . ."

He read the letter through rapidly, and then, turning back to the beginning, he read it slowly through again.

"My dear Box X10,—I don't know whether your advertisement was a joke: I suppose it must have been. But I read it this morning, and it's just possible, X10, just possible, you mean it. And if you do, you're the man I want. I can offer you excitement and probably crime.

"I'm up against it, X10. For a girl I've bitten off rather more than I can chew. I want help—badly. Will you come to the Carlton for tea tomorrow afternoon? I want to have a look at you and see if I think you are genuine. Wear a white flower in your buttonhole."

Drummond laid the letter down, and pulled out his cigarette case. "Tomorrow, James," he murmured. "That is today—this very afternoon. Verily I believe that we have impinged upon the goods." He rose and stood looking out of the window thoughtfully.

"You think it's genuine, sir?" said James.

His master blew out a cloud of smoke. "I know it is," he answered dreamily. "Look at that writing; the decision in it—the character. She'll be medium height, and dark, with the sweetest little nose and mouth. Her coloring James, will be——"

But James had discreetly left the room.

TWO.

At four o'clock exactly Hugh Drummond stepped out of his two-seater at the Haymarket entrance to the Carlton. For a few moments after entering the hotel he stood at the top of the stairs outside the dining room, while his eyes traveled round the tables in the lounge below.

Slowly and thoroughly he continued his search. It was early, of course, yet, and she might not have arrived, but he was taking no chances.

Suddenly his eyes ceased wandering, and remained fixed on a table at the far end of the lounge. Half hidden behind a plant a girl was seated alone, and for a moment she looked straight at him. Then with the faintest suspicion of a smile, she turned away, and commenced drumming on the table with her fingers.

The table next to her was unoccupied and Drummond made his way toward it and sat down.

He felt not the slightest doubt in his mind that this was the girl who had written him, and, having given an order to the waiter, he started to study her face as unobtrusively as possible. He could only see the profile, but that was quite sufficient to make him bless the moment when more as a jest than anything else he had sent his advertisement to the paper.

Her eyes, he could see, were very blue; and great masses of golden brown hair coiled over her ears, from under a small black hat. He glanced at her hands, and noted, with approval, the absence of any ring. Then he looked once more at her face, and found her eyes were fixed on him.

This time she did not look away. She seemed to think that it was her turn to conduct the examination and Drummond fumbled in his waistcoat pocket. After a moment he found what he wanted, and taking out a card he propped it against the teapot so that the girl could see what was on it. In large black capitals he had written Box X10.

She spoke almost at once. "You'll do, X10," she said, and he turned to her with a smile.

"It's very nice of you to say so," he murmured. "If I may, I will return the compliment. So will you."

She frowned slightly. "This isn't foolishness, you know. What I said in my letter is literally true. I want you to tell me," and there was no trace of jesting in her voice, "tell me, on your word of honor, whether that advertisement was bona fide or a joke."

He answered her in the same vein. "It started more or less as a joke. It may now be regarded as absolutely genuine."

She nodded as if satisfied. "Are you prepared to risk your life?"

Drummond's eyebrows went up and then he smiled. "Granted that the inducement is sufficient," he returned slowly, "I think I may say that I am."

He saw that she was staring over his shoulder at some one behind his back.

"Don't look around," she ordered, "and tell me your name quickly."

"Drummond — Captain Drummond, late of the Loamshires." He leaned back in his chair, and lit a cigarette.

"My dear Phyllis," said a voice behind his back, "this is a pleasant surprise. I had no idea that you were in London."

A tall, clean-shaven man stopped beside the table, throwing a keen glance at Drummond.

"The world is full of such surprises, isn't it?" answered the girl lightly. "I don't suppose you know Captain Drummond, do you? Mr. Lakington—art connoisseur and—er—collector."

The two men bowed slightly, and Mr. Lakington smiled. "I do not remember ever having heard my harmless pastimes more concisely described," he remarked suavely. "Are you interested in such matters?"

"Not very, I'm afraid," answered Drummond. "Just recently I have been rather too busy to pay much attention to art."

The other man smiled again, and it struck Hugh that rarely, if ever, had he seen such a cold, merciless face.

"Of course you've been to France," Lakington murmured. "Unfortunately a bad heart kept me on this side of the water. Sometimes I cannot help thinking how wonderful it must have been to be able to kill without fear of consequences. There is art in killing, Captain Drummond—profound art." He looked at his watch and sighed. "Alas! I must tear myself away. Are you returning home this evening?"

The girl, who had been glancing round the restaurant, shrugged her shoulders. "Probably," she answered. "I haven't quite decided. I might stop with Aunt Kate."

"Fortunate Aunt Kate." With a bow Lakington turned away, and through the glass Drummond watched him get his hat and stick from the cloakroom. Then he looked at the girl, and noticed that she had gone a little white.

"What's the matter, old thing?" he asked quickly. "Are you feeling faint?"

She shook her head, and gradually the color came back to her face. "I'm quite all right," she answered. "It gave me rather a shock, that man finding us here. You've stumbled right into the middle of it, my friend—rather sooner than I anticipated. That is one of the men you will probably have to kill. ."

Her companion lit another cigarette. "What is his particular worry?"

"First and foremost the brute wants to marry me," replied the girl.

"I loathe being obvious," said Hugh, "but I am not surprised."

"But it isn't that that matters." She looked at Drummond quietly. "Henry Lakington is the second most dangerous man in England."

"Only the second," murmured Hugh. "Then hadn't I better start my career with the first?"

She looked at him in silence. "I suppose you think that I'm hysterical," she remarked after a while. "You're probably even wondering whether I'm all there."

Drummond flicked the ash from his cigarette, then he turned to her dispassionately. "You must admit," he remarked, "that up to now our conversation has hardly proceeded along conventional lines. I am a complete stranger to you; another man who is a complete stranger to me speaks to you while we're at tea. You inform me that I shall probably have to kill him in the near future. The statement is, I think you will agree, a trifle disconcerting."

The girl threw back her head and laughed merrily. "You poor young man," she cried; "put that way it does sound alarming." Then she grew serious again. "There's plenty of time for you to back out now if you like."

She was looking at him gravely as she spoke, and it seemed to her companion that there was an appeal in the big blue eyes. And they were very big: and the face they were set in was very charming—especially at the angle it was tilted at, in the half-light of the room. Altogether, Drummond reflected, a most adorable girl. And adorable girls had always been a hobby of his. Probably Lakington possessed a letter of hers or something, and she wanted him to get it back. Of course he would, even if he had to thrash the swine to within an inch of his life.

"Well!" The girl's voice cut into his train of thought and he hurriedly pulled himself together.

"The last thing I want is for the incident to finish," he said fervently. "Why—it's only just begun."

"Then you'll help me?"

"That's what I'm here for." With a smile Drummond lit another cigarette. "Tell me all about it."

"The trouble," she began after a moment, "is that there is not very much to tell. At present it is largely guess work, and guess work without much of a clue. However, to start with, I had better tell you what sort of men you are up against. Firstly, Henry Lakington—the man who spoke to me. He was, I believe, one of the most brilliant scientists who has ever been up at

"That Is One of the Men You Will Probably Have to Kill."

Oxford. There was nothing, in his own line, which would not have been open to him, had he run straight. But he didn't. He deliberately chose to turn his brain to crime. Not vulgar, common sorts of crime—but the big things, calling for a master criminal. He has always had enough money to allow him to take his time over any coup—to perfect his details. And that's what he loves. He is quite unscrupulous; he is only concerned in pitting himself against the world and winning."

"An engaging fellah," said Hugh. "What particular form of crime does he favor?"

"Anything that calls for brain, iron nerve, and refinement of detail," she answered. "Principally, up to date, burglary on a big scale, and murder."

"My dear soul!" said Hugh incredulously. "How can you be sure? And why don't you tell the police?"

She smiled wearily. "Because I've got no proof, and even if I had . . ." She gave a little shudder, and left her sentence unfinished. "But one day, my father and I were in his house, and, by accident, I got into a room I'd never been in before. On a desk lay some miniatures, and, without thinking, I picked them up and looked at them. I happen to know something about miniatures, and, to my horror, I recognized them. Do you remember the theft of the celebrated Vatican miniatures belonging to the duke of Melbourne?"

Drummond nodded; he was beginning to feel interested.

"They were the ones I was holding in my hand," she said quietly. "And just as I was wondering what on earth to do, the man himself walked into the room."

"Awkward — deuced awkward." Drummond pressed out his cigarette and leaned forward expectantly. "What did he do?"

Drummond gets a warning to keep out.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Be Sure It's the Right Road.

It's the best policy to go slow enough to make sure of the way you would go. There's many a youth carried away by the enthusiasm of the minute. He has never learned the true sense of values, and lacks the measures for proper ratings. Many get the work bee and leave school long before they are fitted for toil. Some get the idea that they are never treated right at any job and throw it up before they get to the point of earning a dividend for their employer. Still others leave home thinking they will have full opportunity to do as they please. How little such folks understand life. There is much repentance that would never have been needed, and tears that might have been spared if folks had been willing to take the right road in life.—Gelt.

Mysterious Stove.

At a recent electrical exposition a "mystic stove" attracted no little attention. This idea is by no means new; in fact, in one of its most spectacular forms it consists of a kettle of water boiling on a cake of ice. The solution of such mysteries is powerful magnetic induction, which causes the generation of powerful electric current in the pot, pan or kettle. The layman is, of course, greatly mystified, since water can be boiled, eggs fried, and so on, with no visible source of heat. The hand can be passed over the tapestry-covered table without feeling any trace of heat.—Scientific American.

High Prices.

The night cashier overheard a peculiar conversation in Beaver Crossing the other day. A farmer was in a store buying some groceries. "Want any flour?" asked the grocer. "No, flour's too high. I can git along without it." After a while the grocer said: "Sold your wheat, Bill?" "Nope; I'm going to hang onto mine; they ain't payin' nothin' for it yet."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Famous London Street.

Grub street, London has been renamed Milton street. It was a street in which many writers lived who had not yet "arrived," so, because a general name for the haunts of needy writers.

He's Married.

"What's his present salary?"

"He says it's never present long enough to know!"—Wayside Tales.